

VZCZCXRO8927
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHFR #1767/01 3651233
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 311233Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7986
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0932
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 001767

NOFORN
SIPDIS

FOR SECRETARY CLINTON FROM AMBASSADOR RIVKIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PARM](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: DIVERGENCES WITH FRANCE ON UPCOMING POLITICAL
ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON WAY FORWARD

Classified By: Ambassador Charles Rivkin, for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Our current relationship with France is so profoundly healthy that conventional wisdom now asserts that there are no significant differences in the foreign policies of our two countries. While it is true that the relationship is at a historical peak, it is not the case that our objectives and approaches are identical on all major issues. Upcoming events in 2010 will bring to the forefront some foreign-policy divergences in our relationship with France -- primarily in our approaches to multilateral issues like arms control, European security, and the Middle East. These differences will present challenges, and they risk causing last-minute ripples in our bilateral relationship if not addressed early in our planning. Some issues are being driven by outside deadlines, such as the upcoming May 2010 NPT RevCon, the global nuclear security summit, and the Lisbon NATO summit next fall. Afghanistan, which is addressed in other reporting, may also fall into this category, since a French decision on further contributions will be contingent in part on the outcome of the January conference in London. Other divergences come from tactical differences towards shared objectives (in particular the French President's predilection for proposing high-level summits on everything from Middle East peace to European security). The most difficult to manage will be those issues that Paris believes could potentially impact core French values, such as their policy of nuclear deterrence. In such cases, the French will show the least flexibility. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

NONPROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

12. (C/NF) BACKGROUND: The U.S. and France are in substantial agreement on our goals for the May 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (NPT RevCon). However, these issues will also present some of our biggest challenges. France can act -- and has -- as a "force multiplier" for the United States with more passive European partners on non-proliferation issues from Iran to supporting UN counter-proliferation capacity-building efforts. However, the approach of the NPT RevCon poses a concrete deadline for the United States and France to address our ongoing differences on nuclear disarmament. France argues that a U.S. focus on disarmament at the RevCon would open the door for non-aligned nations to make the conference a referendum on actual disarmament progress by the P3. These nations would thus make signing on to further concrete non-proliferation commitments contingent upon further disarmament by the United States, or more worrying from Paris' perspective, comparable disarmament or transparency efforts by France. As France has already made significant

disarmament efforts and has a markedly smaller nuclear arsenal than the United States, French officials tell us additional cuts would negatively impact France's nuclear deterrent capabilities. Therefore, France wants to focus as much as possible on non-proliferation at the NPT RevCon and, ideally, avoid any significant discussion of disarmament.

-POTENTIAL FOR FRENCH FLEXIBILITY: Low on policy, but medium on tactics. The GOF position on disarmament reflects France's national obsession with its nuclear deterrent. French officials do not hesitate to describe their commitment to maintaining their independent deterrent as "psychological." This applies not only to the capability itself, but to the concept of a deterrent. The French frequently express their concern that U.S. calls for a "world free of nuclear weapons" serve to delegitimize nuclear weapons as an element of strategy. However, the French understand the United States is also committed to maintaining a nuclear deterrent force for as long as necessary. While the French can probably adjust to our differences on ultimate disarmament objectives, they are more worried by the arguments we might make to achieve our shared non-proliferation goals at the RevCon. French officials have explicitly threatened to "stonewall" or "put (the United States) on the spot" if they feel their disarmament red-lines are jeopardized by U.S. statements.

-WAY FORWARD: To maximize cooperation and minimize the risk of French obstructionism in P5 negotiations or at the RevCon itself, it may be worth again making clear our "rhetorical red-lines" as well as our policy red-lines. If it is vital to our RevCon strategy to highlight our objective of a "world free of nuclear weapons," to stress the link between P5

PARIS 00001767 002 OF 004

disarmament and stricter non-proliferation measures under the NPT, or to call on other nuclear weapons states to make further disarmament efforts, we should make this very clear in advance to the French. The French will not like it, but advance notice may at least prevent a last minute overreaction that could threaten P3 unity on our shared goals for the RevCon.

-DEADLINE: Soon. The RevCon is scheduled for May 2010. Reaching a modus vivendi with France on disarmament tactics at the RevCon is critical to ensure the success of ongoing P5 consultations and outreach to Non-Aligned Movement nations.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE

13. (C/NF) BACKGROUND: France, including President Sarkozy himself, wants to be a serious player in Middle East peace, and French officials are continually frustrated by a perceived lack of progress on an issue that impacts French national interests and world standing. Sarkozy's keen interest is also evident in his re-balancing of France's role by building close ties to Israel and in his attempts to marginalize entrenched Middle East experts (in the MFA and elsewhere) who do not respond to his calls for new, active policy directions. Sarkozy is prepared to support U.S. efforts, but he has latched onto the idea of a Middle East summit as a way of jump-starting the process. To add legitimacy to his initiative, he tried to partner with Egypt, as co-president of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), but he is not wedded to any particular format. For example, French MFA contacts are starting to float ideas of a smaller summit, headed by the quartet or other grouping, to achieve the same result, and France has reportedly squared this initiative with Russian desires, sanctioned by the UN Security Council, to host a conference.

-POTENTIAL FOR FRENCH FLEXIBILITY: High, but at a cost. Since U.S. participation in any summit would be a basic requirement, France has little room for maneuver without the USG's blessing. However, given Sarkozy's personal interest,

continued U.S. reluctance may become a growing irritant to the GOF.

-WAY FORWARD: Our current strategy for responding to French inquiries is to note the conditions-based requirement for a successful dialogue. If the USG does not believe the timing is currently right for a summit meeting, we may find it helpful to provide a more definitive frame of reference to our French interlocutors as to the potential timeline or specific conditions-based requirements for a summit. As long as Sarkozy remains hopeful that a summit could be possible, anything less specific is unlikely to dampen his enthusiasm or efforts and contribute to raised expectations that could harm our effort.

-DEADLINE: Ongoing. Sarkozy will continue to seek opportunities to present his ideas to us and to others, particularly in the context of other international summit-level meetings.

EUROPEAN SECURITY

14. (C/NF) BACKGROUND: France has been pushing for a high-level discussion on European security ever since President Sarkozy surprised allies in October 2008 by publicly proposing a summit to address the Medvedev proposal for a new treaty covering European security architecture. The French goal is two-fold: to engage Russia and to break the logjam on intractable issues like the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty. While we succeeded this June in anchoring this discussion in the OSCE Corfu Process, divisive Russian tactics and high-level French impatience are likely to keep this issue simmering in the foreseeable future. The impetus in Paris comes from the highest level; it is President Sarkozy himself who believes that any non-response by the allies to Russian proposals leaves the ball in our court. French officials admit they were "surprised" by the draft text that Russia is now circulating, but continue to stress that a response by allies is required. Further, Sarkozy is reportedly very impatient with the slow Corfu process and is already tasking his staff to come up with alternate proposals to make progress -- including following

PARIS 00001767 003 OF 004

up on his original idea for an OSCE summit in 2010. GOF officials fear that without a concrete deadline/goal, the Corfu process will simply lose momentum and we will have a "lost year" in 2010. All indications are that there is nothing Sarkozy abhors more than what he perceives to be a vacuum. On CFE, French officials are becoming increasingly vocal that we need to re-engage on next steps once START negotiations are complete and have evidenced a willingness to de-link CFE from Russia's fulfillment of its Istanbul commitments. Further, MFA Strategic Affairs Director Patrick Maisonnave recently said that Paris supports including the human dimension in our broader security discussions, but that it should not be used to halt progress entirely. "Human rights is not at the heart of the question of security," Maisonnave stated. Post understands from Presidency contacts that Paris is preparing a non-paper to argue once again that the deadline of a summit will add the necessary stimulus for progress on issues from CFE to Nagorno-Karabakh.

-POTENTIAL FRENCH FLEXIBILITY: Medium. Strong USG and allied opposition to French support for a summit may not make the idea go away, but could encourage the French to morph their plans for engagement into something more acceptable.

-WAY FORWARD: To maximize the chances for constructive cooperation, post recommends beginning a regular dialogue with the French on these over-arching issues of European security, using the "2 plus 2" political-military discussions currently scheduled for January 20 in Washington as a good step. German influence and actions can also play a big role

in channeling French activity, so additional follow-up in a Quad format may be worth considering. Finally, we may want to think about taking a page from the French handbook and suggest an alternative proposal that may include a deadline for progress -- this could be a lower-level conference, formation of a working group, or other event. This could give Paris the target it claims is currently lacking, channel some of the French energy and allow us to selectively move forward on the issues that we deem sufficiently ripe, without forcing a broader preliminary discussion at the highest level.

-DEADLINE: Ongoing. We can expect this to be a continuing discussion in 2010 given the enduring interest by the French President, even if few allies are on board.

MISSILE DEFENSE

15. (C/NF) BACKGROUND: Thus far, France has taken pains to be supportive of U.S. missile defense efforts in Europe, including agreeing to positive language for the declaration at the 2009 NATO summit in Strasbourg and in the communique issued at the December NATO ministerial meeting. However, French officials have warned us that the "devil is in the details," and we will be hard-pressed to get agreement at the 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon in the absence of a clearer idea of what the U.S. is proposing, and more specifically, what we expect NATO common funding to pay. Maisonnave has noted to us that it is still unclear how our "Phased Adaptive Approach" (PAA) will interact with NATO's Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) and what modifications and concomitant costs may be required. Even more fundamental to French interests is the impact of missile defense on France's nuclear deterrent capability. The impact of MD on the French deterrent could be simple cause and effect -- if other countries develop more strategic missiles due to NATO implementation of a MD system it could call into question French deterrent capabilities. However, potential MD disagreements can also run deeper, such as when France recently balked at calling missile defense a "mission of NATO" in the December ministerial communique, which to French ears called into question the core purpose of NATO and had potential implications on French deterrence policy. French officials concede that MD could complement their deterrent, but emphasize that it can never become a substitute for this core element of French defense.

-POTENTIAL FRENCH FLEXIBILITY: High. GOF officials are blunt in stating that French reluctance is tied to financing rather than political will, and in an era of financial constraints and growing public deficits, the financial question is not a negligible one. However, France is fully prepared to work with us on missile defense as long as we are cognizant of their nuclear deterrence red-lines and consult

PARIS 00001767 004 OF 004

fully on costs and technical parameters of our proposed system.

-WAY FORWARD: The sooner we are able to share more concrete information with the French and our other NATO partners, the more time we will have to make our case for why territorial missile defense is essential to NATO and how we can make PAA work with ALTBMd to implement it. The French hope that early in the new year we will be able to provide more technical information about what the United States envisions so that discussions can begin in earnest about what Allies will be expected to pay for or to contribute.

-DEADLINE: The first half of 2010. The more we can do to provide early and concrete information, the less likely we are to have any disagreements in the run up to the Lisbon NATO summit in November 2010.

RIVKIN